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To: Energy & Technology Committee Members

From: Jennifer Evans, West Hartford Community Television, Executive Director

Written Testimony Regarding Raised Bill No. 6460

An Act Concerning Public Access Channels

Most of HB 6460 does not directly affect West Hartford Community Television, but we have the following concerns regarding Sections 3 and 4.

Section #3 – impact of lack of interconnection agreement on collection of funds from subscribers

(2) the certified competitive video service provider shall provide funds for community access operations, as provided in subsection (k) of section 16-331a, provided a certified competitive video service provider shall not collect from its subscribers the amount required pursuant to subsection (k) of section 16-331a until such provider has an interconnection agreement with the incumbent community antenna television company;

WHC-TV takes no position on this provision as long as that it is clear that PEG providers will continue to receive the payment required even if the video service provider is not able to collect that amount from its subscribers (if it has no interconnection agreement). The core provision of the law is to fund PEG community television as an important community resource. The budget of the PEG provider is unaffected by the identity of the video service provider or whether that video service provider has an interconnection agreement, and a PEG provider should not be penalized because a new video service provider enters a market. Any attempt to limit the per subscriber payment to the PEG provider by any video service provider, incumbent or new, should be rejected.

Section 4. – use of PEGPETIA funds for “staff and labor expenses”

The PEGPETIA fund was established to fund capital purchases. WHC-TV does not object to including similar “one-time” expenses, for staff and labor costs (such as training for a new piece of equipment), but we think it is a mistake to use PEGPETIA funds for ongoing operating expenses. Although we understand why some providers seek to use available funds for operating expenses, especially in the midst of a recession and strained public budgets, we think this is not only contrary to the purpose of PEGPETIA but also ultimately counterproductive, both because it does not provide a permanent improvement and because it does not encourage new initiatives and thereby increase the quantity and quality of community television productions.

West Hartford Community Television, Town Hall, 50 South Main Street, CT 06107 (860-561-1260)

Comcast Channels 5, 95 & 96 AT&T U-verse Menu 99 Online and On Demand on whctv.org
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For the Community, by the Community